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L E T T E R

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND THE
LORD BISHOP of CARLISLE,

CONTAINING A FEW
R E M A R K S

ON SOME
PASSAGES of his LORDSHIP'S PAMPHLET,

INTITLED,
"CONSIDERATIONS *on the Propriety of Requiring*
a Subscription to ARTICLES of FAITH."

L O N D O N:

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L E T T E R
To the RIGHT REVEREND the
LORD BISHOP of CARLISLE.

My LORD,

AS soon as I heard of the publication intituled,
“*Considerations on the Propriety of requiring a
Subscription to Articles of Faith,*” and that the
Bishop of Carlisle was generally supposed to be the
Author; it was natural for me to be very desirous of
reading it, having been taught, from my first acquaint-
ance with the Scriptures, to entertain a high veneration
for your Lordship, on account of your learned
and free inquiries, and uncommon degree of candor
and moderation; qualities most amiable, in one of
talents so respectable.

Your exaltation, my Lord, to the Episcopal Dignity, has not had the same unhappy effect upon you, as such preferment hath had upon many others, who

have been thereby rendered, not merely indifferent to the cause of religious liberty, as if it was a trifling affair, unworthy the notice of such great men; but, what is much worse, have been too often led into a strenuous opposition to it. In some cases charity itself can hardly impute this conduct to any good motive; it is almost impossible not to suspect that it arises from pride, and that want of feeling for those in the lower stations of life, which are too often the companions of an exalted rank.

Many such persons might be named, and one particularly, who but lately filled the highest station in the Church. I will not, however, on this occasion, rake into the ashes of the dead: was it not sometimes necessary to deter the living, by recording the infamy of those who once sat in the places now allotted to them, benevolence would most devoutly wish, that every thing disgraceful to the memory of the departed, could be buried in oblivion. I will not mention any living examples of this kind, though the Right Reverend Bench (so much honoured by your Lordship's having a seat on it) furnishes more than one. I leave them to the keen remorse arising from their own reflections, if they have yet any generous feelings remaining; and if they have not, it would be in vain to write.

There is a much greater pleasure in displaying the excellencies of such a character as your Lordship's, than the most spiteful and malignant can enjoy in exposing

posing the follies and inconsistencies of many of your brethren, who could not have acted otherwise than they have done in some late instances, even if it had been their principal view to gratify the worst passions of their greatest enemies, and to confirm all the lovers of truth, of liberty, and of justice, in a fixed aversion to them.

You, my Lord, have always been honourable and consistent. In every station which you have hitherto filled, you have acted as the friend of Religion. You have been always ready, with an amiable candour, to assist the free inquirer, and generously to give their due tribute of praise to those who have laboured in the common cause of Christianity and Protestantism, notwithstanding their attachment to an interest, which the generality of the Clergy are too apt to despise, and on whom they look with a degree of contempt, which those who have some acquaintance with the men and their writings, will find they by no means deserve, though few are willing to be so unfashionable as openly to acknowledge their worth.

The *Considerations* are worthy of the Author to whom they have been ascribed. They are ingenious, acute, solid, and liberal. It is painful to animadvert on the sentiments of a Divine so amiable; and it may be thought rash in one of my small abilities to set myself in opposition to one so learned. A person, however, of mean talents, may discover something wrong in what is advanced by the most accomplished

scholar; and I am really of opinion that even the Bishop of Carlisle cannot reconcile the following sentiments with the true principles of honour, and then it necessarily follows, that they must be at variance with the maxims of the Gospel. I refer to the following passage, p. 32. of *the Considerations*.

“ *Were some persons sensible of this, (that is, of the*
 “ *difficulties the Members of the Establishment lie*
 “ *under, in the present confused state of things) they*
 “ *would not surely be so forward to suspect us of hypocrisy*
 “ *and prevarication, while we esteem ourselves bound to*
 “ *keep up all these forms till relieved by a proper authority,*
 “ *nor impute it wholly to our private interest, when we*
 “ *ministerially comply with what we are not able to*
 “ *remove, and patiently remain in posts, however in-*
 “ *vidiously misrepresented, where it is conceived that we*
 “ *may do more good, and perform a more acceptable service*
 “ *to our common Master, by continuing to labour on his*
 “ *waste vineyard, and wait his own good time for op-*
 “ *portunities of using our little influence (hereby prevented*
 “ *from growing still less) towards pruning a few wild*
 “ *branches in it, and rooting out some of the rankest*
 “ *weeds, rather than despond immediately on every just*
 “ *cause of offence that must occur to us, or peevishly revolt*
 “ *at each injurious reproach that will be cast upon us.*
 “ *If our first Reformers had quitted their stations in the*
 “ *Church, instead of using all their endeavours to*
 “ *amend it, should we have had reason either to admire*
 “ *their spirit, or applaud their conduct at this day?*”

Sentiments similar to these have been advanced long ago, and they have also been condemned; but I do not remember to have heard that the subject has ever been particularly discussed in any distinct treatise, with regard to conformity to the established Church of England; nor have I seen any Remarks on this passage of your Lordship's Pamphlet, except a short and sensible animadversion in the Monthly Review for February, 1774*.

Now, since those opinions always carry weight with them, which have the sanction of great names, and if they are wrong, have a dangerous tendency in proportion to the learning and worth of those who advance and defend them; it is the duty of such as are convinced of their evil nature, to refute and expose them. I would therefore hope, that the following Considerations, though they come from an obscure person, will not be thought quite unworthy of being attended to, either by your Lordship, or any other Members of the Establishment, whether Clergy or Laity, who acquiesce in conforming to that which they take the liberty freely to condemn.

Was there nothing to be objected to in the established terms of Conformity but the colour and shape of garments, the continuance of a few cere-

I have seen "the Defence of the Considerations, in reply to a Letter from the Clarendon press," the argument of which I apprehend turns upon the propriety of Subscription in general.

monies, or some uncouth phrases, and needless repetitions retained in the public forms, very strong arguments might be urged even against a compliance with these, nor should a little expence, and the appearance of singularity (which men are sometimes ashamed of, when it would be praise-worthy) be any impediment to forming societies on a better model. It might, however, appear more eligible to men not at all influenced by worldly motives, to comply with those things, though they could wish to see them altered, rather than have their labours confined to a few, and a separation of religious interests take place.

But the case is now, in my humble opinion, very different. That the Bible contains every thing which we are to believe and practise, is universally allowed by all Protestants, and your Lordship is persuaded that it ought to be their only rule. But if the Bible is to be one only rule, how can a Subscription to articles be justified, which were drawn up at first, and are still enforced, upon the supposition, that a Declaration of Faith in the Scriptures alone, is not sufficient to qualify a man to take upon him the office of a Minister of the Gospel? Is it not, in fact, giving up this great principle, to submit to any tests drawn up by fallible men? Can a man, who is convinced that this is the case, make such a compliance without hesitation? And would it not be better for one, doubtful of the propriety of it, to submit to some present inconvenience, and leave the

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event to God? To offer arguments in proof of the proposition, that the Scriptures ought to be the only rule of faith amongst Christians, may be thought very needless in an Address to your Lordship: But as it is impossible to tell into whose hands any publication may fall, it may not be improper to say a little on this head; and as nothing new can be offered, what the learned Bishop Sherlock hath observed on this subject, in his Sermon upon contending for the faith, will be fully sufficient.

* “ It is to little purpose to exhort men to be
 “ zealous for the Christian Faith, unless you can give
 “ them some sure and certain mark, to know what
 “ the right Faith is. If you inquire of particular
 “ Churches, or Societies of Christians, which is the
 “ true faith? each of them will answer, that the
 “ faith professed by them is the true one, and that
 “ other societies have fallen into errors and mistakes.
 “ In this divided state of things, therefore, no
 “ Church has a right to be believed on its own
 “ word merely, without giving a reason of the faith
 “ which is in them: And yet, this pretence of au-
 “ thority is the only thing that can be said, and
 “ therefore it always is said, to justify the dominion
 “ which the Church of Rome has usurped over the
 “ Faith of Christians. With how much better
 “ grace might St. Jude have dictated to the Chris-
 “ tians of his time, and told them, upon his

* Sermons, vol. 4, Discourse 12, Ed. 6.

“own authority, what the true Faith was in opposi-
 “tion to corrupt Teachers? But does he so? By
 “no means: So far from it, that he gives them
 “another rule to examine the Faith by, and sends
 “them to inquire what the Faith was, which was
 “once, or from the beginning, delivered to Chris-
 “tians.”

After having made these just observations on the
 conduct of St. Jude, the learned Bishop thus rea-
 sons: “Since an Apostle of Christ, in early days
 “of the Church, sent Christians to inquire after
 “the Faith delivered from the beginning; it follows
 “manifestly, that the Apostles themselves were but
 “Teachers and Witnesses of the Faith, and had no
 “authority or commission to make new Articles of
 “Faith. Had it been otherwise, how absurd was
 “it in St. Jude, to send Christians to an inquiry
 “after the Faith once delivered, when he and they
 “could not but know that there was standing au-
 “thority to make Articles of Faith, and that no such
 “inquiry was wanting.

“The truth of this conclusion may be abundantly
 “proved, by considering the commission and au-
 “thority the Apostles received from Christ, and
 “their conduct in the execution of them: Go ye,
 “says our blessed Lord, into all the world, and
 “preach the Gospel to every creature, Mark xvi.
 “15. The Gospel then was the thing committed
 “to them to be taught to the world, and not to be
 “made, or to be altered by them; which sense is
 “delivered

“ delivered in terms more exprefs in St. Matthew ;
 “ for there the words are, *teaching them to observe*
 “ *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*, ch. xxviii.
 “ 20. The promise annexed, *and, lo I am with you*
 “ *to the end of the world*, must be relative to their
 “ commission, and they could depend on it no
 “ longer than whilst they kept within the limits of
 “ their commission, which was to teach what Christ
 “ had commanded.

“ When the time of our Saviour’s leaving the
 “ world drew near, he told his Apostles *he would*
 “ *not leave them comfortless, but pray the Father to*
 “ *send them another Comforter, to abide with them for*
 “ *ever*, John xiv. 16. The office of this Comforter
 “ is described, ver. 26. *The Comforter, which is the*
 “ *Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name,*
 “ *he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to*
 “ *your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.*
 “ If then the office of the Spirit was to bring to
 “ their remembrance what Christ had said to them,
 “ their office, as Teachers, could only be to publish
 “ the doctrine of Christ. The Spirit was likewise
 “ to teach them all things, that is, to teach them
 “ to understand rightly all things, and to preserve
 “ them from mistaking the meaning of what our
 “ Lord said to them, which was frequently their
 “ case whilst they conversed with him on earth.”

It would make this quotation too long if I should
 insert what the Bishop offers to prove, that the
 Apostles faithfully executed the commission with
 which

which they were intrusted. However, as his Lordship says, "It is evident that the Apostles were "Witnesses and Teachers of the Faith, and had "no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of "Christ, or to declare new articles of Faith." "Now," adds he, "if the Apostles, commissioned directly "by Christ himself, and supported by the miraculous gifts of the spirit, had not his power, can "any of their successors in the government of the "Church, without great impiety, pretend to it? "Did the Bishops and Clergy of the ninth and tenth "centuries know the Articles of the Faith better "than the Apostles did? Or were they more powerfully assisted by the Holy Spirit? No Christian "can think or say it."

If this reasoning be just, (and I have never yet seen it refuted) it is certainly very great presumption in any set of men whatever to draw up Creeds and Articles, and impose a Subscription to them upon others. But are not those persons equally guilty who assent to them? Is there not some reason to fear, that the great Head of the Church will be offended with such as submit to the usurpation of an authority which belongs solely to him? *If ye love me*, says our blessed Lord, *keep my commandments*; and if it be one of his commandments to receive the Gospel as our only rule; what right have we to dispense with this command more than any other? He hath told us, that it is impossible to serve two masters, whose interests and commands are contrary; and are those worthy of being

being termed his servants, who comply with the requirements of persons, whom they are convinced actually, though not always intentionally, oppose his design who hath given us one rule of Faith? Would it not be much more honourable and consistent to admonish such men of their error, and if they refuse to correct it, to leave them? Besides these arguments against Subscription in general, (and which cannot be excused, because the Church has somewhere declared, that no Doctrines are to be received but what can be proved from Scripture) there are some particular objections to the Articles of the Church of England, which contain Doctrines rejected with disdain by many of its Members.

Article 8 is as follows: "*The three Creeds, Nice Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.*" That the Athanasian Creed is a collection of unscriptural phrases, containing an unscriptural doctrine, is the opinion of many in the Communion of the Church, whilst its damnatory clauses are shocking to every man of the least benevolence and humanity. A small number indeed ought to be excepted from this charge, who are so prejudiced in behalf of every thing ancient and established, that notwithstanding an amiable natural temper, they can see nothing absurd in damning thousands of their fellow creatures, because they cannot receive an opinion, to defend which the warmest advocates for
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it are involved in perplexity, and continually proposing different and contrary explanations. With such it would be in vain to reason, nor will I trouble your Lordship with arguments on so disagreeable a subject. One plain question is fully sufficient. Can any man of real integrity, deliberately subscribe this Article, unless the whole of the Athanasian Creed is believed to be strictly conformable to the great rule of Faith?

“ Article 9. *Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendred of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.*

“ Article 11. *We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.*

“ Article 13. *Works done before the Grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School Authors say) deserve grace of congruity: Yea, rather for that they are not done as*

“ God

" God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we
 " doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

" Article 17. Predestination to life is the everlasting
 " purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of
 " the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by
 " his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and
 " damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out
 " of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to ever-
 " lasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Where-
 " fore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of
 " God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit
 " working in due season; they through Grace obey the
 " calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of
 " God by adoption; they be made like the image of his
 " only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously
 " in good works, and at length by God's mercy they
 " attain to everlasting felicity. As the godly considera-
 " tion of Predestination and our Election in Christ is full
 " of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly
 " persons, and such as feel in themselves the working
 " of the Spirit of Christ; mortifying the works of the
 " flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their
 " mind to high and heavenly things, as well because
 " it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of
 " eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as
 " because it doth fervently kindle their love towards
 " God. So, for curious and carnal persons lacking the
 " spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the
 " sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous
 " downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either
 " into

"into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

Great pains have been taken to prove, that this Article does not include the horrid doctrine of Reprobation; but if it be not expressly mentioned, it is most clearly implied, for it supposes all men to lie under a curse and damnation, and that men are not saved from it by their own pious and virtuous endeavours, aided by the Spirit of God, but by an everlasting Purpose and Decree, made before men, or the world itself, had any existence. Those who are not included in this Decree, are described as being given up to a reprobate state of mind, and the Divine Being is charged not only with their damnation, but, what is still more shocking, with placing them in circumstances, by which they are unavoidably led into sin, and then punishing them, not as a display of his power, but on account of those crimes which were the necessary consequence of his own Decree, *" thrusting them into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living."* The latter Clause of the Article, contains a very good caution: *" Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture; and in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God."* This caution is given, upon a supposition that the Doctrine of Predestination is true, and was designed to guard men against that negligence as to their conduct into which it might lead them; but if men are predestinated, they

they will be led to good works, as the articles declare, by the Spirit of God. Such as are not included in the decree, *curious and carnal persons*, are given up to the power of the devil. So that this caution is of no use, unless the truth of the article itself be doubted; and if that be the case, can an honest man declare, that he believes it to be agreeable to the word of God?

"Article 18. *They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.*"

This article damns not only the Heathens, who can never be expected to believe in a Saviour of whom they have not heard, but also denounces the same woe against those charitable Christians who believe that the Divine Mercy will extend to the good and virtuous amongst them, and that they will be interested in the redeeming Love of Christ, "*who died for all*;" and when he judges the world in righteousness, will deal with the Gentiles according as they have regarded the law written in their hearts; for there is no respect of persons with God, Rom. ii. throughout.

It is very well known that the Methodists are reproached by the Clergy, in the severest manner, from the pulpit, the press, and in private conversation, for defending the sentiments contained in these articles;

and the Laity in general join in the censure, lamenting that such doctrines should be preached to delude and distract the ignorant multitude, and expose Christianity to the scorn of every despicable Infidel. Surely it is a strange instance of human weakness and absurdity, that any men should be advocates for a Subscription to a system, the particular tenets of which they so severely condemn: But it is much more strange, that those who are the professed enemies of Subscription to all human Articles whatever, should on any account adhere to an establishment, where it is indispensibly necessary, on entering into the Ministry, to declare "*all and every of those Articles to be agreeable to the word of God* *," when they treat the plain Doctrine of them, as being little less than blasphemy, and in their nature and often in their consequences subversive of all virtue and religion.

To say that they will bear a different meaning, is to destroy the use of Language. If such reasoning be admitted, promises and engagements, oaths and declarations, are trifling and nugatory. If an Arminian can subscribe the Articles above-mentioned, a Papist may subscribe the 6, 14, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 35, 37. Very opposite indeed are the tenets contained in them to those of the Church of Rome, but not more opposite than the others are, to the sentiments of thousands in Communion

with the Church of England. It would not be thought harsh to charge Papists with equivocation, and to express the strongest abhorrence of such a trick in Religion in them: And surely Protestants have no exclusive right to make the same evasions without censure, nor to do that for their private advantage, which a zeal for advancing the interest of their own Community would, in the Romish Priests, be censured as detestable hypocrisy.

Our first Reformers were doctrinal Calvinists; it was for many years the unanimous opinion of the whole Church, that the Articles were Calvinistical; and it will hardly satisfy an upright man to be told, in opposition to such plain evidence, that a latitude was intended which the words will not possibly admit of, and of which those who lived nearest to the times of the compilers had no idea.

I am sensible that great numbers defend their Subscription by the help of Article 6, which is as follows:

“ Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

To this Article every Christian, when properly called upon, will give his chearful assent: But how could it ever have entered into the heart of man, to defend a Subscription to doctrines contrary to Scripture,

ture, because one Article of the Subscription is, that Scripture is to be the rule of Faith?

This being an Article of the Church, it may be urged as an argument of the impropriety and absurdity of imposing others, but it can never justify a Subscription to them.

There is no clause inserted, signifying that the 39 Articles themselves, of which this is one, are only to be received as far as they are agreeable to Scripture.

The 8th Article expressly declares, that the Athanasian Creed "*may be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture.*" By the 36th Canon, every Clergyman engages "*that he will minister with faithful diligence, the doctrine, and sacraments, and discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same.*"

The first part of the proposition is unexceptionable; but how can any person subscribe to the latter part, unless he be fully persuaded that the Church and Realm have received the true doctrines of Christ?

This clause is intirely superfluous, unless it be meant to exclude all but such; and in like manner, though the Scriptures are declared in the Articles to be the rule of faith, yet it was undoubtedly intended when the other Articles were compiled, that all those should be excluded from officiating as Ministers in the Church, who did not believe them to be strictly agreeable to the said rule.

This appears to be the case beyond all contradiction, from another clause of this 36th Canon, by which the subscriber declares, "*That he does willingly, and ex animo, acknowledge all and every the Articles contained in the Book of Articles of Religion, being in number nine-and-thirty, to be agreeable to the Word of God.*"

And to prevent (as far as human prudence and policy can prevent) any equivocation or mental reservation, every Clergyman is obliged, "separately and distinctly, to read all these Articles in the time of Divine Service, within three months after his being presented to any living; and then and there, in the face of the congregation, to declare his approbation of them all *." If men can do this, and yet be allowed to disbelieve, to deny, to reprobate any one doctrine contained in them, there is no oath that can bind, there is nothing which deserves the name of falsehood.

* Mr. Burne, in his Ecclesiastical Law, Vol. I. p. 127. 4to. mentions the case of a Clergyman who was sued in the Spiritual Court, in order to deprivation, for not giving assent to the Articles; he read the Articles, and then said, "I give my consent unto them, so far forth as they agree with the word of God;" and it was adjudged that this was not such an unfeigned assent as the statute intendeth; but that the assent ought to be absolute and without condition. For, as Lord Coke saith, "the act was made for the avoiding diversity of opinions; and by this addition the party might, by his own private opinion, take some of them to be against the word of God: And by this means diversity of opinions should not be avoided, and the act hereby made of none effect."

But there still remains another impediment to a conformity with the Establishment, and that is, the forms of worship. Subscriptions and declarations but seldom occur: The case is different with regard to the Liturgy, which must be constantly used; and though a Divine may have such preferment in the Church, as to enable him to procure a substitute for the performance of this part of his duty, yet decency will require a pretty constant attendance upon the public service; and this is a mark of approbation which a conscientious man may well scruple to give, whilst he has any solid objections to it.

“The solemn assent and consent, which persons taking orders must give to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer,” is a grievous imposition: Is it not however a much harder task to use phrases in the most solemn acts of worship, not only unscriptural, but contrary to the doctrines of Scripture, and to be obliged to ascribe glory to the Holy Ghost as a distinct person from the Father, declaring that it was so from the beginning, and will be so to the end, when there is neither precept nor precedent for it in the word of God? How then could it have been the practice from “*the beginning?*” How can any one, who does not believe that this kind of worship has any foundation in Holy Writ, join in the affirmation, that it “*ever shall be?*”

I do not mean to insinuate, that the sentiments of your Lordship, or the doctrine of the Trinity, are different from those of the Church; but to one of your

your liberal and enlarged mind it must be very disagreeable, to see many worthy men forced from its communion, and others reduced to the sad necessity of quibbling and evasion in these most sacred matters.

The Apostle declares, that *to us there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. viii. 6. *Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father*, Ephes. ii. 8. *We are commanded to give thanks to God and the Father by or through him*, Col. iii. 17. For this command the Apostle had the authority of our blessed Lord himself, who had promised, *John xiv. 13, 14. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. If ye shall ask any thing in my Name, I will do it.*

This appears from many passages of Scripture to have been the practice of the Apostles; and we are also authorised by St. Peter, 1 Ephes. v. 11. "*To ascribe glory and dominion to Christ for ever and ever;*" and also by the beloved disciple, *Rev. i. 5, 6.* not to mention what is said with regard to the heavenly Host, *Rev. v. 8, &c.* which will justify any Church in the use of these Doxologies; and being thus recorded, have the force of a command.

Whether we may direct any prayers to Jesus Christ, as a distinct object of religious worship, is at least doubtful. The case of the Martyr Stephen, which is always alledged in defence of this practice, was a very peculiar one. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God. It was very natural for him to commend his spirit to that

Jesus, for whose sake he was then expiring; and as to the prayer for his enemies, his using the word Lord, by no means implies that it was directed to him; this is a title by which the great God himself, whose glory he saw, is generally addressed.

The same answer may be given to the arguments drawn from *Acts* xxiv. 2 *Cor.* xii. 8. The circumstances were peculiar, the one being for direction in the choice of an Apostle, the other a petition from an Apostle to be delivered from an infirmity, which he thought prevented his usefulness in that Church of which Christ was the Head, the government thereof having been committed to him by the Father.

It must be acknowledged on all hands, that the general direction of the Gospel is to address the Father in and through Jesus Christ as the Mediator.

This rule is observed in some parts of the Litany, but there are many deviations from it.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them addressed distinctly as *God*; and after that most unscriptural form of invocation, "*O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God: have mercy upon us miserable Sinners:*" The whole (including petitions for the forgiveness of sins, for mercies temporal and eternal, for the civil and religious interests of mankind, and for the various circumstances of our fellow-creatures) is offered up not to the God and Father of all in the name of Christ, but to Christ himself, as the sole object of worship. The Lord's-Prayer is indeed repeated towards
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the end, and another prayer follows it upon the Scripture model; after which Christ is again addressed in his own person.

Now it is well known that many, both of the Clergy and Laity, have adopted Dr. Clarke's, and notions still more heterodox with regard to the Trinity, and the numbers of such are probably increasing.

It appears strange to those whose minds have not received early prejudices in favour of Establishments, that any Layman can join in prayers formed on a plan which he thinks contrary to the Gospel: It is however much more strange, that one who professes himself to be a Preacher of that Gospel, and is set apart to explain and enforce its truths, can be the mouth of an assembly in the performance of such worship. Did such passages occur but once or twice, an Arian or Socinian Layman might, with a better grace, vindicate his attendance on the worship, as he might sit down at the time of their being repeated. But could an Arian or Socinian Minister, with any good conscience, make use of them? As matters now stand, the impropriety and unlawfulness of persons in such sentiments, joining in these forms, is glaring: They are continually occurring; they are repeated again and again; and he must be in a strange distracted state of mind, who attends the public service, without approving the Athanasian part of it. "If (as the excellent Mr. Lindsey observes in his Apology) "invocations so particular, language so express and
"personal,

“personal, might be sifted and explained away into
 “prayer to one God only, I might, by the like sup-
 “posals and interpretations, bring myself to deify
 “and pray to the Virgin Mary; taking her, as the
 “Papists do, to be now alive and beatified in heaven;
 “and maintain that I was still only praying to the
 “one God, who was thus invoked in his creature that
 “was so nearly united to him.” Surely a man, an
 enemy to idolatry, might worship any of the heavenly
 bodies, or the consecrated wafer on the Popish altar,
 without deviating farther from that integrity and up-
 rightness which ought to attend every act of religion,
 than the enemy to Athanasianism does, who ascribes
 glory to the Holy Spirit, declaring, “that it was so
 from the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.”
 How can those who confess that they do not find any
 such thing in the Scripture, join in saying that it was
 from the beginning; or that it ever shall be professed
 and acknowledged, since we have so much reason to
 believe, that every corrupt addition to the words of
 the Lord Jesus will in time be utterly rejected by the
 professors of his religion? That this time may be
 hastened, it becomes us to pray; but surely nothing
 can so effectually retard it, as a compliance with
 what we are convinced is doubtful and spurious.

This is far from being a likely means of en-
 lightening the ignorant, rousing the thoughtless,
 and convincing those of their error who receive
 them as truths. Surely the Gospel, though it ex-
 horts us *to love one another with a pure heart*
fer-

fervently *, and forbids *our judging a brother, or condemning a brother*, yet loudly calls upon all to come out from amongst, and to be separate from those, whose doctrines and forms are contrary to their own views and sentiments, after a serious and impartial inquiry.

No, says your Lordship, in the passage before quoted (and in which many others agree; many perhaps influenced by the authority of so great a name) "We ought not to be suspected of hypocrisy and prevarication, while we esteem ourselves bound to keep up all those forms, till relieved by a proper authority, nor ought it to be imputed wholly to our private interest, when we ministerially comply with what we are not able to remove." If a man entertains enlarged sentiments on religious liberty, he must certainly do violence to his judgment, when he suffers himself to be shackled by the fetters of human authority. The title of hypocrite, indeed, belongs to those, who, though they disapprove of these things, yet conceal their dislike, as the best way of advancing their temporal interest; but it is somewhat difficult to say by what name they should be distinguished, who like your Lordship openly acknowledge that their practice is greatly *at variance with their principles*.

To comply with what is wrong, especially in matters of such sacred importance, is to pay very little

* 1 Pet. i. 22. Mat. vii. 1.

regard to the apostolic exhortation, "*be not conformed to this world.*" "*Ministerially to comply,*" is submitting to be the tools of the civil magistrate, to be used by him in any work about which he shall think proper to employ you, as if you had neither will, understanding, nor sentiment of your own. Here I cannot avoid asking, though the question has been so often repeated: Where would have been our Christianity, if the Apostles and primitive Bishops; where would have been our Reformation, if our Luthers and Calvins, our Ridleys and Latimers, had thus complied? No man is absolutely forced to submit to the established forms. The moderation of the times enables those who disapprove of them, to unite in societies where the worship may be conducted more agreeable to the rules of reason and Scripture: Opportunities for religious improvement are not confined to the walls of the church. To be resolved "*to wait till relieved by a proper authority,*" seems like an acknowledgment, that there is a proper authority vested somewhere to make these terms of communion. This authority however is controverted; it is denied: We have their example to plead for denying it, to whom the immediate inspiration of the Almighty had given understanding. When persons appear to be fully convinced of this, when they declare publickly against this claim of authority, and yet submit to it, men will naturally ask, What motives could induce them to make this compliance?

As

As it happens to be the case, that great honours and rich preferments are in the gift of the magistrate, and that a conformity to his injunctions is the only way by which they can be obtained, the generality are of opinion, that this consideration has the greatest weight with those who engage in the work of the Ministry. Whoever has the least acquaintance with history, or knows any thing of our own times, will be convinced, that there are some of much nobler views, and who have from principles of conscience refused the emoluments because they scrupled the terms. But when those who see the evil nature and tendency of established creeds and forms, and endeavour to convince the world how necessary it is to make very considerable alterations, still continue to reap the advantages of their conformity to them, and even renew their declarations of assent as often as any other preferment comes in the way, it ought not to be made a matter of wonder, if it be imputed even to the low principle of self-interest, though few chuse to acknowledge that they are actuated by it.

A person whose whole time has been spent in a course of study, to fit him for some business or profession, must be very loath to quit it, especially if he has no other support, and knows of no other employment to which he can apply. Great indulgence will be shewn to such a one, by all the candid and humane. Those, however, who excuse and vindicate a compliance in such circumstances, should not think of denying that self-interest was the motive, but content them-

selves with urging the difficulty of sacrificing all regards to it; a plea which will be much more readily admitted. To be reduced to the dilemma either of conforming or starving, is dreadful; but I think it hardly possible that such a case should happen. A worthy man and a tolerable scholar may surely earn his bread some way or other, besides officiating as a Minister, unless he be of a very singular turn of mind. Another situation perhaps may neither be so respectable or advantageous; but may not a man be called by Providence to give this proof of his integrity, and how can that, or any other virtue be tried, unless there be some temptation to deviate from it? And though a deviation be admitted as an excuse in some very trying situation, yet the same excuse can never be urged when the temptation is removed. We should pity the starving wretch stealing to satisfy a present necessity, but if he plundered his neighbour of silver and gold, and that time after time, he would justly be thought a thief and a robber.

The conscientious divine subscribing for a slender support, is an object of compassion; but it requires a very partial regard for a man to acquit him of wandering from the rules of honour and integrity, when he repeats this Subscription to add a second living to the first, and perseveres in doing it as often as any new preferment or higher post of honour is offered. Surely it ought not to be deemed illiberal, if such a one is charged with making a trade of religion; he has no right to be

be angry with the infidel who sneers, or the believer who reproaches.

Your Lordship, indeed, offers one plea worthy of a Christian Minister. You think that the Clergy, who wish for an alteration in the established forms, ought not to be censured when "*they patiently remain in posts, where it is conceived they may do more good, and perform a more acceptable service to our common Master, than by quitting them.*" But how shall Men, who are to be excited to virtue and piety, by the examples as well as by the precepts of their teachers, be assured, that this is really the grand motive which induces them to make these compliances, and continue to wear the yoke? Will they not suspect that a regard for the benefice, and not for the office, leads them to make these disagreeable subterfuges? Will not the generality be ready to say of those divines, who express their fears lest their usefulness should be lessened by a resignation, that the true cause of their fear is, that the Church will not be so useful to them?

The words of the honest and excellent Mr. Lindsey, on this head, deserve to be written in letters of gold: "If (says he) it be a rule in morals, *quod dubitas, non feceris*, it is still more evident, that we are not "to do any thing that we know to be evil, no, not "to procure the *greatest good*, Rom. iii. 8. For God "does not want my sinful act. It would be impious "to suppose, that he cannot carry on his government "and promote the felicity of his creatures without it.

" And

“ And although in his Providence he may bring good
 “ out of my evil, yet will he not let the doer of it go
 “ unpunished. And if any thing be evil and odious
 “ in his sight, prevarication and falshood is such;
 “ and most of all, an habitual course thereof in the
 “ most solemn act a creature can be engaged in, the
 “ worship of him the holy, all-seeing God.”

A good Christian may certainly “ prune many
 wild branches,” “ and root out many rank weeds
 from the vineyard of Christ,” without taking upon
 him the office of a Minister in the Church of England,
 or any other established Church. The world may be
 instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Gospel
 from the press, and if pious, practical treatises are
 slighted, it is not the author’s fault. Your Lordship,
 or any other Clergyman, may open a place of wor-
 ship in any part of England, as Mr. Lindsey has
 done in London; and if but few should attend, the
 promise of our blessed Saviour is very encouraging:
Where two or three are gathered together in my Name,
there am I in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. The
 vineyard of Christ is not an inclosure, but a common.
The Field is the World, Matt. xiii. 38. Where-ever
 there are rational creatures, the seed may be sown, it
 must be left to *God to give the increase,* 1 Cor. iii. 6.
 If men form themselves into societies, make terms of
 communion unknown to Christ and his Apostles,
 and then call their Church the vineyard of the Lord,
 will it not become the Servants of Jesus rather to
 labour without the pale of such a Church, than gain
 admittance

admittance by submitting to the usurpation? The private meeting is as much a part of the Lord's vineyard, as the stately cathedral; and it is possible that a man may be as acceptable to God, and as useful to men, who officiates in the former as in the latter.

My Lord, Persons who take pains to be acquainted with the truth, as it is in Jesus, who spend a great part of the week in preparing themselves for the duties of the Sabbath, and make all their studies subservient to their usefulness as Ministers, may impart of the fruits of their inquiry with pleasure to a little flock. Such may wish for an opportunity of sowing the seeds of instruction in the public congregation, with an humble hope that their endeavours may be useful; but sensible that God does not expect that from them, which they are not able conscientiously to do, are thankful for the privilege of the private meeting and the smaller audience. Such stand some chance of having credit given them, when they declare that to be useful as Ministers is their chief desire, but even the candid will be tempted to suspect those, whose labours are rewarded with rich preferments and honourable posts.

The authors of the Monthly Review for February 1774, have very well expressed my sentiments on this head. In regard to the passage which hath occasioned my troubling your Lordship with this address, it is their opinion, that "a different conduct from what you mention might conduce greatly to the ad-

C

"vancement

" vancement of virtue and true religion. Were but
 " a few of the superior Clergy, of respectable cha-
 " racters and distinguished abilities, to unite in en-
 " deavouring to bring about a further reformation,
 " and exert their utmost endeavours for this purpose,
 " notwithstanding any opposition they might meet
 " with from Ministers of State, or merely political
 " men, and, failing in the attempt were they to quit
 " their stations in the Church, such a conduct could
 " not fail to be attended with the most beneficial
 " consequences. It would stamp a real dignity on
 " their characters; it would be the strongest proof
 " that could possibly be given of their sincerity; it
 " would contribute not a little towards lessening that
 " contempt for the Clergy, which many Laymen are
 " too apt to express; it would place the necessity of
 " altering our ecclesiastical Constitution, in the clearest
 " point of view, and would tend more towards
 " awakening even the most thoughtless to a serious
 " sense of religion, than the most judicious and
 " elaborate productions from the press *."

Your Lordship, and the Gentlemen to whose con-
 sideration I would humbly offer the remarks con-
 tained in this publication, are without doubt well
 read in that masterly work the Confessional. When

* If I had not thought the passage very much to my purpose, I
 would not have quoted it from a Review. It may have the ap-
 pearance of courting the favour of the Reviewers, a meanness
 which I despise; and far am I from thinking so meanly of them,
 as to imagine they would spare me on this account.

I reviewed the excellent arguments contained in the 8th chapter of that book, against those who oppose alterations, and they hold equally good against those who defend their Subscriptions, by pleading the unfitness of the times; that is, in other words, the obstinacy of the Clergy, (as that author hath clearly shewn in the same chapter) which hinders the Reformation they wish for, I was much discouraged, though I had taken up my pen on purpose to obviate the latter plea. If such an Herculean reasoner hath not been able to silence the argument, surely I must expect that my labour will be in vain. I encourage myself, however, with the hope, that no attempt, made to serve the cause of truth, will be intirely useless; if new arguments are not offered, old ones may be called to remembrance, and those who have not seen one publication, may happen to meet with another. Curiosity may induce some to read what an author hath the boldness to lay before the public in an address to one of the Bishop of Carlisle's eminence. If only the author himself is established more firmly in honest and worthy principles, a good end is obtained. " It is now about 50 years (says the author of the Confessional, and many more are added to the number) since the venerable Bishop of Winchester advanced this maxim of considering the world *as it is*, rather than as it ought to be; and " as the maxim itself has been almost universally " adopted by the Clergy, it is but reasonable to " expect that it should by this time have been justified

“by better fruits, than would have been brought
 “forth by our endeavouring to reform the world by
 “the stricter precepts of the Gospel. Are then the
 “men or the times, upon whom these accommod-
 “dating methods have been tried, in any better dis-
 “position than they were before they were intro-
 “duced? Are their prejudices rooted out, their tem-
 “pers softened, their constitutions refined, or their
 “manners purified, by these prudential expedients of
 “Reformation? The Bishop of Winchester’s maxim
 “is, however, in as much repute as ever. And no
 “wonder. Doctrines which have in them so much
 “ease and convenience, with respect to the teachers
 “of Religion, and so plausible an air of moderation
 “towards their disciples, are in no danger of going
 “out of fashion, let them be confronted by ever so
 “many plain facts, or refuted by ever so solid rea-
 “soning. They pass from hand to hand with the
 “perfect approbation of all sides; and with whom-
 “soever it is that we have any disputes, of which
 “the conduct of the Clergy makes a part, Disquisi-
 “tors, Dissenters, Infidels, or Heretics, the apology
 “is always drawn from the nature and necessity of
 “the times.” Confessional, p. 344. 2d edit.

This apology is worn thread-bare; if men conti-
 nue to be proud and covetous, and ready to make
 their Religion subservient to their worldly interest, it
 will be full as good a hundred years hence as it is
 now. Since therefore the peaceable compliance re-
 commended by it, has not been attended with the

desired effect, and if we may conclude from what is past, is not likely to be so for the time to come, it may perhaps be better to try some other method. There must certainly be some extraordinary comfort administered by Subscriptions, or good men could not endure the yoke so long, without finding their patience at all exhausted; but they might give full as good a proof of their being possessed of that virtue, if they would submit to the inconveniences arising from a refusal of those comforts which Subscription bestows.

Let those Divines, who are persuaded that the terms of Conformity are improper, resign their preferments, leave the Communion of the established Church, and thus let their actions speak them to be in earnest. This will be a convincing proof to the world, that they believe the objections they make to be of an important and interesting nature. It will be a noble proof of their zeal for pure Christianity, if they will make so great a sacrifice as an evidence of their sincere attachment to it. This will help to silence the Infidel, who, it cannot be denied, has some cause to form an opinion of the Clergy, not much to the credit of Religion. Every rational seceder from a wealthy establishment does much to wipe off this reproach; and we have reason to rejoice in that there have been some such in every age, and their numbers have been great since the happy æra of the Reformation.

Your Lordship indeed says, “ If our first Reformers had quitted their stations in the Church, instead of using all their endeavours to amend it; should we have had reason to admire their spirit, or applaud their conduct at this day ?” Without pretending to rival your Lordship in historical knowledge, I may venture to affirm that this passage by no means conveys a proper idea of the conduct of those so justly distinguished by the venerable name of Reformers; nor is it a fair representation of what those, whom you censure as too sanguine and warm, would wish you and others, who are now pleading for a farther Reformation, to do.

Our great Reformer Wickliffe, did not indeed leave the Church of Rome, and gather a separate congregation; but we may be very certain, from the accounts which we have of this extraordinary man, that when he wrote against indulgences and pardons he never traded in them; that as he opposed the doctrine of Purgatory, he ceased to offer up prayers for departed souls, and having declared against the authority of the Pope, that he never acknowledged it, for the sake of adding some other preferment, to the living of Lutterworth, which was all he had. He wished to see many things altered, and his best abilities were exerted in the attempt, without any regard to the security of his own private emoluments. Many of his followers worshipped God according to the dictates of their consciences, assembling together in private retirements, from whence numbers of
them

them were dragged to the gibbet and the stake, justly thinking that they were performing a very acceptable service to the great Head of the Church, by laying down their lives for the brethren, for their fellow-citizens and countrymen; some of whom were, by this means, excited to pay a very serious attention to the concerns of Religion; and a way was paved to prepare the minds of men for that Reformation, to which their compliance with the then established forms would have contributed very little.

John Hufs would not, in all probability, have been burnt, had he submitted to recant, as required by the Clergy in power.

Jerome, of Prague, the disciple and friend of Hufs, was prevailed upon to make a recantation, but he afterwards severely condemned himself for it: "Yes, (said he) "with horror I confess my base cowardice; "it was only the dread of the punishment by fire "which made me to consent, against my conscience, "to the condemnation of the doctrines of Wickliffe "and John Hufs *." To make all possible amends for this weakness, he suffered patiently and chearfully, singing hymns when going to the flames. Would these men, my Lord, have declared their assent and consent to Articles proposed by the governing powers, contradicting their avowed principles, under the pretence of being desirous to continue in stations where they might do some good? This would certainly

* Biographical Dictionary, vol. vii. p. 41.

have brought disgrace upon themselves and their writings; their conduct might perhaps have been approved by the cautious and timid, but there would have been no room for applauding their spirit. Their doctrines after this would have been little attended to, or at best only have made hypocrites as fast as they made profelytes, unless the disciples had been endowed with more spirit than the masters. It was their patient suffering which stamped their names with immortal honour; and what numbers have been since raised up, and called them blessed?

The brave Lord Cobham, whose name I scarce ever mention without rapture, bore a like noble testimony to the cause of truth, without having recourse to subterfuges and evasions. The Archbishop of Canterbury, not satisfied with his Lordship's opinions upon the doctrines about which he was called in question, told him, "that the determination of holy Church, by which all Christians ought to abide, should be given him as a direction of his Faith." Useful and important as his life might have been, not only to those who began to see and to dislike the errors of Popery, but to his country in general, he did not endeavour to preserve it by an assent to such determinations, but was resolved to abide by the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles. He was condemned as a Heretic, and accused likewise to his prince of being a traitor; but he would not submit to any compliances unworthy of a Christian, even to avoid the disgrace and torment of being hung up
alive

alive in chains (fastened round his body) upon a gallows, and thus burnt to death.

This noble sufferer was, indeed, a Layman, but he was nevertheless an example of patience and integrity, to which even a Bishop may look with reverence; and I make no doubt, but that the Bishop of Carlisle has the highest veneration for his memory.

Luther, Melancthon, Zuinglius, Calvin, and those other great men, to whom so many nations and provinces are indebted for their deliverance from the Popish yoke, separated from the Communion of the Church of Rome, and contented themselves with those lesser emoluments and inferior honours, which the then low state of Protestantism could afford, and of which they stood in continual danger of being deprived.

The worthies who adorn the annals of our own country, did not go on subscribing to the doctrines, and assenting to the use of all the forms which were retained in the Church. Light broke in upon them gradually, and they went on reforming accordingly. They did not leave the Communion of the Church, nor throw up their offices in it, because alterations were continually making favourable to their views. In the boisterous days of Henry VIII. they made some progress, and a very fair prospect was opening towards the close of his reign, which made the remaining burden sit easy, by inspiring a chearful hope of getting quite rid of it. When queen Mary ascended the throne, these hopes were blasted, and then

then the pillars of the Reformation would not appear to be the supporters of Popery. They preferred exile to posts of dignity, and suffered their bodies to be burned, rather than make declarations inconsistent with that simplicity and godly sincerity which ought ever to distinguish the disciples of Jesus. Their sufferings proved in the event more serviceable to the cause of Religion, than all their labours could have done had they conformed to the times. Farrar, Hooper, Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer, were worthy of those high stations in the church to which Providence raised them: Posterity reveres them as Bishops, but their patiently undergoing the fiery trial, is that which renders their memory most dear and sacred. Had they not been Martyrs as well as Bishops, of how great an honour would this country and the Reformation itself have been deprived? Precious are the names of Philpot and Rogers *, Bradford and Taylor, Saunders and Simpson, and many more, the illustrious examples of manly forti-

* This true Saint and Martyr was Rector of St. Sepulchre's, in London; and so little did the terrible sentence of burning affright him, that on the morning of his execution he was so fast asleep as not to be easily wakened. He had a wife and ten children, who all met him as he was going to the stake; but this affecting circumstance did not abate his constancy. A pardon was offered him if he would recant, but the fire was less dreadful to him than life upon such terms, which, as he declared, he resigned up with joy, as a testimony to the doctrine which he had preached.

tude

tude and Gospel integrity. Nor ought † Coverdale, Fox, Sandys, Grindal, Sampson, Humphreys, Jewel, and other such like worthy confessors to be forgot, who forsook every dear and valuable connection in their native land, rather than countenance what their judgments led them to disapprove, though established by the greatest authority. What true Protestant is there, who does not, to this day, “ admire their spirit, and applaud their conduct ?”

I should not have mentioned these things in an address to your Lordship, had not your expression, to my great surprize conveyed, what appears to me, a wrong idea of the behaviour of our first Reformers, and also of what is now expected by many, as the proper method to be taken by persons in your Lordship's sentiments.

Had our Reformers quitted their stations in the Church, and retired into silence and obscurity, instead of endeavouring to point out the corruptions of Religion, and obtain an alteration, they would then have been very blameable. They were strenuous and unremitting in pulling up the rank weeds, and cutting down the wild branches of the vineyard; and whilst they had opportunity for doing this in their

† This Divine was a foreigner of eminent piety, and a zealous preacher; on which account he was made Bishop of Exeter by the religious king Edward. In the reign of queen Mary he left both his Bishopric and the kingdom, but returned again after her death, and preached in London, where he was much followed, till God called him to his reward.

respective

respective posts, it was their duty to remain in them; but no sooner was an obligation laid upon them, either virtually to condemn their principles, or be removed from the places they had so worthily and usefully filled, than they did not hesitate, but followed the plain dictates of uprightness and integrity. They subjected themselves to deprivations and imprisonments, thus proving themselves sincere; but not content with this alone, they still exerted their abilities to the utmost, in trying to open the eyes of the deluded people, till God himself put an end to their labours, by suffering them, in his wise Providence, to become victims to the burning zeal of their persecutors.

Many of the friends of Christian Liberty wish to see your Lordship, and some others, follow such great examples (ardently hoping, however, that you will never be exposed to trials so very sharp and severe) and in imitation of the confessors, who are the glory of the present age, Robertson and Lindsey, give up preferments which so many, both of the Establishment and amongst the Dissenters, are of opinion, those cannot hold with a good conscience, whose ideas of Scripture are different from the sense which the Church puts upon it. This would by no means oblige you to remit in your endeavours, as to obtaining an amendment. The press would be open; and if the apology of a Vicar for resigning his living excited such attention, how much would it be increased if a Bishop published an apology for resigning his

his See, displaying to the world the principles which led him to it, and adding one more to the glorious number of those who have preferred the reproach of Christ to all the riches of the world?

If not only your Lordship, but all those other worthies who joined in the late petition, could be persuaded to do this, what a noble instance of self-denial would it be to silence the reproaches of infidels in these days of refinement and effeminacy? Would it not, in all probability, greatly tend to promote a spirit of inquiry amongst the Laity, which might be attended with the happiest effects? When the manners of the age are reformed, then there is reason to hope that the public system of Religion will be altered; and as a truly disinterested conduct in the Ministers of the Gospel would be the most likely means of promoting the one, so by natural consequence it would have the best tendency to effect the other.

To my knowledge, and that of some of my particular friends, there are numbers of the Laity quite dissatisfied with the public forms; and yet from a blameable aversion of appearing singular, will not join dissenting congregations, but grow more and more indifferent to Religion in general, and are in danger of becoming a prey to infidelity. It is impossible to join with true devotion, when the language used in the worship is at variance with the opinions of the worshippers; it must be productive of great coldness, and naturally leads to Scepticism.

Such

Such are more likely to be wrought upon by a conduct like that of Mr. Lindsey, than by ten thousand arguments to form themselves into societies, where the Divine Being may be addressed in a manner agreeable to their apprehensions of his perfections and attributes, and thus they and their respective families be grounded in the principles of virtue and true Religion. When this is rendered less singular, a great impediment will be removed; and surely it is the duty of all the friends, much more of the Ministers of Religion, to see to it; not only that *"they * do not lay a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in a brother's way;"* but also to use their best endeavours to remove all such obstructions, without paying any regard to the expence and labour.

A Bishop indeed enjoys a post of great honour in the Church, as established by law; but to be the Bishop or Pastor of a very small congregation, formed upon pure Scriptural principles (according to a man's own ideas of it) would be a much more honourable, and perhaps useful post, in the Church of Christ at large, and inspire the mind with an humble but well-grounded hope of being exalted, by the great Lord of all, to felicity and glory, when earthly distinctions will be quite disregarded.

Of this our Reformers were persuaded; they acted agreeably to this persuasion; the vindication therefore, which your Lordship offers for yourself and

* Rom. xiii. 14.

some others, does not receive any countenance from their examples.

Some there were indeed, who said all they could, without exposing themselves to those sufferings, which the boldness and persevering firmness of others brought upon them.

The learned and amiable Erasmus stands at the head of these, and may with propriety be called *chief of the trimmers*.

Dr. Jortin apologizes for this great man by supposing, that “ he was not intirely free from the prejudices of education; that he had some indistinct and confused notions about the authority of the Church Catholic, which made it not lawful to depart from her, corrupted as he believed her to be; and that he was much shocked by the violent measures which were pursued by the Reformers, as well as by the violent quarrels which arose among them.” The Doctor cannot be persuaded, “ that the fear of losing his pensions, and coming to want, ever made Erasmus say or do things which he thought unlawful; yet supposes that he might be afraid of disobliging several of his oldest and best friends, who were against the Lutheran Reformation, such as Henry VIII. Charles V. the Popes, Wolfey, &c. and also his patrons Warham, Montjoy, More, Tonstall, Fisher, Bembus, &c. and all these things might influence his judgment, though he himself was not at all aware of it. There is no necessity to suppose that he acted against his conscience, in
“ adhering

“adhering to the Church of Rome; no, he persuaded himself that he did as much as piety and prudence required from him, in censuring her defects *.”

This is probable, for he says of himself, “I follow the decisions of the Pope and the Emperor, when they are right, which is acting religiously: I submit to them, when they are wrong, which is acting prudently; and I think it is lawful for good men to behave themselves thus, when there is no hope of obtaining any more *.”

It appears, however, very plainly, from the accounts which we have of Erasmus, that he acted a very shuffling and evasive part, and was shy of acknowledging those principles which in his heart he approved and ever revered. We are, as Dr. Jortin observes, “as Protestants, certainly much obliged to Erasmus, for spending a long, laborious life, in opposing ignorance and superstition; yet we are more obliged to Luther, Melancthon, and other authors of the Reformation.” Erasmus is not intitled to the character of the Christian hero, nor to be recommended as an example worthy the imitation of the disciples of Jesus, who like good soldiers ought to defend the cause of their great leader, even unto death. Those, however, in our days, who justify a like conduct, by the authority of so great a name, would do well to remember, that

* See Biographical Dictionary, article Erasmus.

Erasmus had something to plead in his favour, which they cannot. An open rupture with the Church of Rome, would have exposed him not only to poverty, but to the flames. Against a death so terrible, the weakness of human nature strongly reluctates; he would very possibly have been content to have given up both honour and wealth, could he have been assured that no severer proof of his integrity would have been required. But be this as it may, with regard to him, whoever makes any compliances contrary to the dictates of conscience, to avoid some present inconveniencies (to say no more of it) acts a part very unbecoming the dignity of man.

The illustrious Father Paul stands also in the foremost rank of the timorous and cautious Reformers. It is very certain that he was but a lukewarm Papist; the zealots hated him; one of the Pope's Nuncios raving at him, declared, that he was worse than Luther or Calvin; and though he lived to his seventy-second year, yet Pope Gregory the XVth, when he heard of his death, was transported, as if it had been a miracle, and could not help speaking of it as the handy-work of God to take him out of the world. The Reformed urged him to declare publicly in their favour, but his answer was, "that God had not given him the spirit of a Luther." Some interpret this saying as a censure upon the great warmth of that eminent man; but there is reason to infer, both from his writings and his general character, that he was conscious how much he loved ease and quiet,

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which, as he had not the resolution to sacrifice, he could not persuade himself to engage openly in a cause requiring activity and boldness. But what did this illustrious man gain by his moderation? The advocates for the court of Rome disparaged his abilities, vilified his character, and hired desperadoes to assassinate him, who gave him fifteen wounds, and left him for dead, though he was providentially and wonderfully recovered. They could not have done worse had he left their communion, which would, in all probability, have been of great service to the Protestant cause; for so great was his authority in the famous Republic of Venice, that his perseverance and resolution might have determined them to shake off the Papal yoke, and banish many of its grosser superstitions, when the quarrel happened between that Republic and the court of Rome, which was without doubt the most favourable opportunity that ever offered.

It is said of Father Paul's dear friend Fulgentio, that preaching upon Pilate's question, "*what is truth?*" he told the audience that at last, after many searches, he had found it out; and holding forth a New Testament, said it was there in his hand: But, says he, putting it again into his pocket, "the book is prohibited."

The man who could make this acknowledgment, and yet submit to the prohibition, deserves our pity: And who can avoid blaming him, whom the love of private study and ease could induce to be silent, whilst

whilst truth, revealed truth, was concealed from his countrymen ?

I have heard of Faber, a very learned Frenchman, a cotemporary and friend of Erasmus, and who like him saw the necessity of a Reformation, yet adhered to the communion of the Church, that he was much affected with his conduct at the close of his life. It was not a long illness which naturally sinks the spirits, and often leads to melancholy reflections, which suggested his penitential sentiments. "He and some other learned men, whose conversation greatly pleased Margaret, queen of Navarre, dined with her one day, when, in the midst of the entertainment, Faber began to weep. The queen asking the reason of it, he answered, That the enormity of his sins threw him into grief; not that he had ever been guilty of debaucheries, or the like, but he reckoned it a very great crime, that having known the truth, and taught it to several persons who had sealed it with their blood, he had had the weakness to keep himself in a place of refuge, far from the countries where crowns of Martyrdom were distributed *."

There have been doubts with regard to the truth of this story; but it must be acknowledged, that such reflections were very natural upon a conduct in life, which even self-love can hardly approve, and which there is reason to apprehend no man will be able to

* See Biographical Dictionary, article Faber.

defend at the bar of the great judge of the world, once its humble suffering Saviour, surrounded by the noble army of Martyrs, who followed this great Captain of their Salvation, even unto death. In the season of health and vigour, a degree of pride may reign in the breast, hardly conscious of its sway, rendering a man averse to join himself to a small and despised party, whose tenets his judgment approves, and to the promotion of which he would devote his own abilities, did not the preferments and dignities of a flourishing establishment captivate his heart with their charms.

The prejudices of education, also, long retain their strength; to break off from old connections is difficult, and the fear of singularity had a great effect even upon the honest soul of a Lindsey.

These are considerations which will lead the candid and humane to judge favourably: They may silence, perhaps entirely suppress, the voice of conscience, when calling upon the man and the Minister, to pursue the plain path of honesty. But can any thing inspire a man with noble confidence and assured hope, when the desire of worldly esteem and honour begin to abate, and life draws near to a close, except a consciousness of that which was a matter of such joy to Paul and Timothy, *“that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they had had their conversation in the world?”* And

more abundantly (add they) *to you-wards;*" you to whom we have stood in the important relation of teachers and guides. St. Paul well knew how to condescend to the weaknesses and prejudices of mankind, but nothing could ever prevail with him to give a sanction to the making any thing whatever a necessary term of communion, which inroached upon Christian liberty.

Had Dr. Clarke thrown up his preferments, when he discovered the errors of the Athanasian doctrine, instead of spending his precious time in fruitless endeavours, to reconcile a submission to established Subscriptions and Forms, with his real sentiments, he might have been much more usefully employed, in exposing other absurdities; and such a proof of his integrity would have greatly recommended his writings. This admirable man is an instance of human weakness; he was neither covetous of wealth, nor ambitious of honour, if so, his desires might have been gratified. He could not, however, be persuaded to quit the respectable and valuable preferment, which a queen had bestowed upon him; and though his moderation appeared, in that he sought for nothing richer or higher, yet to what meanness did he stoop, in hiring another to read those forms which he disapproved, and in affording his adversaries so much reason to charge him of "excusing a fraudulent Subscription, by the help of quirks and subtleties?" His writings made many converts, but had he been consistent, his example would have made many more.

The Clergy themselves, though so very tenacious of their forms, might have been alarmed at the loss which the Venerable Mother would have sustained by such a Son's renouncing her Communion, and have been inclined more than by all he could have wrote, to prevent such desertions, by making a few desired alterations.

My Lord, the wise, the reverend head, must be laid low in the dust. The time is hastening on when you, and your brethren of the Clergy, the friends and well-wishers to the cause of Truth and Liberty, must be removed from this scene of action. The name of *Law* will shine in the historic page, and be mentioned with esteem and reverence, by the wise and good of succeeding generations. It is not your having been at the head of a College, or introned in a Cathedral, which will obtain for you this honour. No, my Lord, your learned labours in the cause of religion, your friendly aid lent to those who wish to see Christianity appear in its native beauty, stript of all human additions and inventions; these are the actions which will entitle you to distinction and applause. It does not, however, require a spirit more than ordinary prophetic to foretel, that your admirers will express their wishes, that you had not died a Bishop (if this should be the case) and lament that the farther reformation of the christian world was retarded by such a friend of truth and liberty.

Compliance with established errors can never be the means of getting rid of them. The expectation
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seems to be absurd in itself; experience hath confirmed to us that this is not the way; and it will stamp immortal honour upon, and add unspeakable dignity to your Lordship's name, and the name of others your associates, if they will try that experiment, which unprejudiced reason would direct to, as the most honourable, as well as the most likely method of advancing the wished for reformation.

To take such a step requires resolution, requires self denial, requires a firm and steady faith in the providence of God; but it will yield unspeakable satisfaction, it will intitle you to eternal praise, it will recommend and enforce those great truths of religion, to promote a regard to which is the noblest employment of life, more than ten thousand arguments.

To act thus appears to be the command of God himself, and of such a conduct his faithful servants, whose names are recorded with honour in holy writ, are so many shining examples, and loudly call upon the disciples of Jesus in every age to follow the dictates of conscience, and to tread in the steps of their master, both *through evil report and good report, through honour and dishonour* *.

Abraham, at the divine command, † *left his country, and his kindred, and his father's house* †. Moses, with true greatness of soul, *refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter, esteeming reproach for Christ greater*

* 2 Cor. vi. 8.

† Gen. xii. 1—4.

† Heb. xi. 24, 25.

riches than the treasures in Egypt. When the Jews had corrupted their religion, by adopting rites and ceremonies forbidden by their law, which by degrees led them into a total disregard to it, the prevailing idolatry of the times was never alledged by any true servants of God as an excuse for giving it the least countenance. The persecution was severe and bloody; both the governors and the people had forsaken the covenant, and yet in this season of distress and danger it was not sufficient merely to remonstrate against their wickedness; those only were accounted faithful "*whose knees had not bowed to Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed his image* *." Of these worthies there were seven thousand.

† Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were exalted to posts of great dignity and authority in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, and were, without doubt, enabled by this means to do many kind offices to their countrymen in captivity; but neither a regard to their own safety, nor the specious excuse of being useful to their brethren, which would perhaps in that case have suggested itself to some minds, could prevail upon them to worship the golden image which the king had set up. They knew the thing was wrong in itself, and therefore "*they were not careful to answer the king in that matter,*" but immediately gave a plain and determined reply. It appears (to me at least) very clear and evident that Nebuchadnezzar

* Kings. xix. 18.

† Dan. ii. 49.

had as much right to set up a golden image, and command all his subjects to worship it, as any governors whatever, even of the christian religion have, to make articles of faith and establish modes of worship, for which they have no warrant in holy writ, and then punish men in any respect for refusing a compliance. Bowing down to an image is giving that honour which is due only to God, to a very unworthy object. Every man must judge for himself, but it is in my opinion an equal act of disobedience to our divine master, to comply with the injunctions of those, who arrogate to themselves a right of imposing their own interpretations of his word, upon the faith and consciences of others, and declare that they have authority in matters of faith. Was I forced either to bow down and worship a golden image, (whether it was designed to represent some deity, or the chief magistrate himself) or to declare in a christian congregation my unfeigned assent to the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, I really believe I should prefer doing the former, if the weakness of human nature should prevent me from sacrificing my life to my duty. In such circumstances, to give assent by a motion of the body, to what the heart disapproves, would be rather more tolerable, than in a worshipping assembly to make a solemn declaration of it with the voice.

All the established systems of religion, of which I know any thing, are so contrary in many respects to the pure and undefiled doctrines of Jesus, that the
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men who through ignorance receive them as his, are in danger of forming full as unworthy sentiments concerning his teachings, as idolaters are of the Supreme Being himself; and those who comply with either, through the influence of worldly hopes or fears, are equally to be pitied or condemned as cowards or knaves.

Our blessed Lord hath told us, *one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren*, and we have his express command to *call no man father upon earth* *. These precepts forbid our submission to any human authority in matters of religion, in as plain and positive a manner as those which are levelled at the grossest immoralities; and the wisdom of our Lord is very apparent herein, for it will be hard to mention any one vice which hath been so injurious to the peace and happiness of mankind, none which hath been so great a hindrance to the progress of the cause of truth and righteousness, as this usurped authority. Can those then, acquit themselves of being accessory to these evils, who bow down at an altar, raised as it were in defiance of our supreme lawgiver? With what zeal and warmth does the meek and humble Jesus inveigh against the traditions of the Jewish doctors, by which they had corrupted the law of Moses †? and will he suffer his pure and holy religion to be thus abused, and its gracious designs subverted (as your Lordship knows it has been to serve

* Mat. xxiii. 8, 9. † Mark vii. 1.—13. Mat. xv. 1.—20.

the most base and wicked purposes) and not shew his resentment against all, who have deliberately given the least countenance to it? Has not his declaration been compleatly fulfilled? *It must needs be that offences come* *. Corruptions have been introduced, raised strong prejudices against the gospel, and been the unhappy means of hindering many from receiving it as a revelation of the divine will. And if this saying hath been accomplished, what cause is there to tremble at the denunciation? *but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh*. Happy are they who, like your Lordship, see and expose them, but more happy are the men whom no inducement can tempt to derive either ease, or profit, or honour, from the establishment of any thing which, according to their apprehensions, is a departure from the simplicity of the gospel.

My kingdom, says the Saviour, is not of this world †. Claims of civil power and authority, alliances between Church and State, the dependance of the ministers of Religion upon princes and magistrates, any farther than as all subjects are dependant as members of society at large, are mere human inventions. The ambition and policy of some, and the timidity and meanness of others, have led men to erect, support, and become parties in such compacts, but it is the duty of loyal Subjects to retain their allegiance to their true Sovereign even in an enemy's land, and to

* Mat. xviii. 7. † John xviii. 36.

enter into no engagements contrary to the interest of their native country, unless they have thrown up all connections with it. If the servants of Jesus can trust to his promises, they may satisfy themselves with the hope of being permitted to reign with him in his heavenly kingdom: if his declarations are to be depended upon, it will be better to submit to some present inconveniences, than to be exalted to the highest dignity in a government set up and maintained *really* if not *intentionally* in opposition to his.

The Apostles are the best interpreters of the sayings of their Master; and we have good reason to believe that they were solicitous to put them in practice.

They gloried in being the servants of Christ, and never dared to make that a necessary term of Christian Communion for which they had not authority from him. They disclaimed all *dominion over the faith of Christians*, modestly styling themselves, "*helpers of their joy* *." They were not *to be lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock* †. They submitted their instructions to the judgment of those whom they taught ‡, and reproved such as seemed desirous of setting them up as the leaders and heads of particular parties §. Having these passages in the Sacred Records, so expressly condemning all human authority in matters of Religion, is it sufficient for us, who

* 2 Cor. i. 24.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 4, 5.

† 1 Pet. v. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 25. x. 15.

not only hear these unlawful claims made, but are witnesses to the establishment and exercise of them, merely to condemn them in words? Can any man lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that thus to express his disapprobation, is the most acceptable service, which his circumstances enable him to perform to the great Head of the Church? Is there not reason to suspect, that motives adapted to the weakness of human nature, lead to those compliances, which the understanding, if unbiaſſed, would condemn without hesitation?

Nothing adds such dignity to the human character, as a correspondence between the words and the actions. Those who have not the resolution to put their professions into practice, want either the spirit of men, or the faith of Christians. Every person who deliberately subscribes his name to human articles, by this means gives a sanction to them, for which nothing can sufficiently atone but his renouncing that Subscription, so far at least as never to repeat it, especially in such circumstances as may afford any room to suspect that the judgment was led captive by any of the inferior passions.

Your Lordship needs not to be informed, that a *falling away* * from the purity of the Christian Religion, is prophesied of by the inspired Writers; and the Apostle Paul clearly foresaw what the cause of it would be, when he describes the *man of sin, as one*

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

that opposeib and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God †. This exactly answers to the character of the heads of the Romish Church, who have proudly taken upon them to model and controul all Divine Institutions, and assumed such authority over the consciences of men, as no Being has a right to, but that God, whom in effect they assert themselves to be.

But is it only the Church of Rome which is guilty of this usurpation? Surely those must be very partial to the Protestant cause, who do not acknowledge, that every national Establishment, yea, that every private Society, adding any terms of communion with them, to those which Christ and his Apostles have made, partake of this guilt. If the Scriptures are the only rule for one set of Christians, why not for another? If it be our duty to forsake the Romish Church, on account of its corruptions, why not every other Church adopting any of them? Disputes about doctrines and forms are endless. If an English Protestant objects to a Papist, that transubstantiation is an inexplicable mystery, he will acknowledge it; but tell the objector at the same time, that the Trinity is as inexplicable.

If a member of our Establishment condemns the Romanist for confining salvation within the pale of his own Church, he may presently silence him, by

† 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

saying,

saying, that it is not more absurd than to exclude all Heathens whatever, and such Christians as do not believe the Athanasian Creed, from the mercy of God.

If a Protestant travels from our country into France, and expresses his dislike of the superstitious ceremonies used in their worship, surely he can say no more when he is told, that these are as lawful in themselves, as the few which are retained in the public services he attends when at home; and that as to the kind and the number, they are the best judges, as the 34th Article of the Church of England allows; and as to obliging all their Members to submit to the use of them, it is no more than Protestant Societies do.

Would you, then, my Lord, exhort the worthy and good amongst the Papists to leave the communion of the church of Rome? Would you invite them in the words of the prophetic Apostle? *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues**; and will ye not permit others to address the same language to you? If all human establishments, by whatever name they are called, are parts of the great kingdom of Antichrist, they will assuredly be destroyed together with it. It cannot be denied, that they have at least one principal character of that church, which is emphatically styled in scripture *the mother of abominations*! The

* Rev. xviii. 4.

present very learned bishop of Litchfield and Coventry hath observed, in his lectures on prophecy, (which I quote only by memory) that the "two leading principles of the first reformers were, that the Pope was antichrist, and the Scripture the only rule of faith." Whatever may be said of the first, the last is a sentiment which ought to be inscribed on every Christian's heart, and blessed and happy are they who have never complied with any of those human institutions, which seem to contradict it.

It is a very awful declaration of our blessed Lord's, and it is repeated more than once by himself, and also by his Apostles, "*Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my father which is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven*†." This dreadful sentence was pronounced and recorded, to guard those to whom the gospel should be first preached, against being influenced by those worldly hopes and fears which too often enslave the understanding and the conscience. We have no temptation to deny Christ Jesus, in the strict and literal sense of the words; but as we cannot be too fearful of falling under this condemnation, it may perhaps be prudent to enquire, whether or no a compliance with any thing, which we are persuaded is a corrupt addition to his Religion, and a hindrance to its more universal

* Matt. x. 32, 33. Mark viii. 38. Luke xii. 8, 9. 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.

reception, is not, in some circumstances, virtually denying him? St. John describing Antichrist, thus writes: "*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: * Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: And this is that (Spirit) of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.*" Again, "*Many † deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist.*" Dr. Doddridge observes, in a note on the first of these passages, that "from hence some have argued, that the Pope cannot be Antichrist, because he confesses Christ; and that it must necessarily be some intirely opposing person or sect, and which does not bear the Christian name."

This pious and judicious writer therefore supposes, that *confessing Christ* means, "paying a becoming deference to his authority," and the *not confessing Christ*, "usurping a power entirely inconsistent with a due homage to him, and founded upon principles most opposite to those of his government and religion. It is said to have been already in the world, as the ambitious, imposing, persecuting spirit, which is the very essence of antichristianism, did then greatly prevail."

* 1 John iv. 2, 3.

† 2 John 7.

This seems to be the natural and true sense of these passages; and no person can doubt but that it becomes us to be very careful not to countenance any thing whatever, which men have added to the doctrines and precepts of our Lord and Master, lest we partake of the guilt of the imposers. I would not be thought to insinuate (for I abhor so uncharitable an idea) that the Members of the Church of England, or any other Protestant Establishment, are in the least degree guilty of the crime of denying the Saviour. Great numbers of them have never heard the objections to their forms and systems so stated as to excite their attention; they have been taught that they are perfectly agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the holy Apostles, and submit to them under the sanction of the Divine authority. But surely those who see their evil nature and tendency, and yet submit to the yoke, grievous as it is acknowledged to be, for some present advantage, they have certainly much reason to give a very serious attention to these passages of Holy Writ, and also to the reproofs given to the Churches of Pergamos and Thyatira *. These epistles were dictated by our Lord himself to his beloved disciple; and he threatens them with the fierceness of his anger, unless they would repent, in that some of them had held the doctrines of Balaam, the Nicolaitanes, and Jezebel.

* Rev. ii, 14, 20.

The evil of the doctrines distinguished by those reproachful epithets, consisted (unless I am mistaken) in leading the Christian converts to a compliance with some of the established superstitions, that so they might escape the violence of persecution. Balaam was the means of enticing some of the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols, which exposed them to the severe wrath of God. Some of the primitive Christians being too much in love with worldly ease and prosperity, would, to avoid the anger of their Heathen neighbours, so far countenance their idolatry as to eat of their sacrifices, with an outward appearance of respect to the false gods whom they worshipped. This too much resembled that spiritual fornication and adultery, which God had so severely condemned and punished in the Jewish people; and therefore the chief seducer is called by the name of that wicked woman Jezabel, under whose influence the children of Israel so universally fell into idolatry.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was probably of the same kind; and Dr. Doddridge supposes, that they distinguished themselves by strenuously justifying and propagating their accursed doctrine *.

This practice was contrary to the sincerity which the Gospel requires; it proceeded from a fear unworthy of Christians; it endangered the purity of our holy Religion, and lessened that attention which

* Fam. Expof. Note in loc.

would have been paid to it, had every professor been firm and steady. There is great reason to fear, that the same unworthy principles cause vast numbers of the more discerning in Popish countries to countenance those Superstitions by their examples, which their duty to Christ and to their brethren of mankind calls upon them openly to oppose. Until some honest and brave men exert themselves, to the peril of their lives, millions of our fellow-creatures are likely to continue enslaved to a most absurd and cruel Religion. The faith of Protestants is more pure, and their worship more scriptural, yet too much remains of the old leaven. Of these corruptions, the enemies of Christianity avail themselves; and it is not to be expected that they will be silenced by any arguments which those advance, who use the forms and subscribe the doctrines to which their objections are made. Men must have great partiality to a cause, if they do not find themselves somewhat staggered, when its defenders have recourse to trick, subterfuge, and evasion. Infidels have, in general, imbibed strong prejudices against Christianity, which are confirmed, perhaps rendered quite inveterate, by the suspicions they entertain of the sincerity of its advocates, who, if they will make compliances contrary to the express injunctions of the Religion they defend, and give men so much reason to believe that they act upon motives which ought not to have any weight with a believer, cannot be thought to be really in earnest about any thing.

In this view, a conformity to the established corruptions of Christianity is very prejudicial to the cause of truth and righteousness; and whoever does it to avoid some temporal inconvenience, or obtain some present advantage, has reason to fear that he is neither acting a safe nor an honourable part.

Saint Paul was willing to condescend, as far as any man, to the weaknesses of his Christian brethren, and he circumcised Timothy, that so the minds of the Jews might be somewhat reconciled to the Gospel*; but when there was a party formed in the Church, zealous for the continuance of this rite, "*only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ* †," he speaks of this as a criminal weakness.

It becomes us, my Lord, to attend to our duty; the event must be left to God. I would beg leave to ask of your Lordship, whether it must not appear, in the eyes of the upright and impartial, much more consistent with Christian integrity and our vast obligations to the Saviour, to withdraw from an establishment, by which doctrines and forms are maintained, being, according to our apprehensions, unwarrantable incroachments upon Christian liberty, and contrary to the pure doctrines of the Gospel; than notwithstanding such a conviction, to adhere to it in preference to a separation, formed upon principles more strictly scriptural?

* Acts xvi. 3.

† Gal. vi. 12—14.

Surely to act according to the conviction of our minds, is praise-worthy; to do violence to the dictates of the understanding, how great soever the temptation may be, is very mean and very dangerous. "Conscience (as your Lordship well observes, p. 14, of the Considerations) once stained, seldom contracts again to its first dimensions."

Surely that awful sentiment, "*if we deny him, he will also deny us **," ought to render Ministers very cautious how they comply with worldly establishments; and though great discouragements are annexed to a dissent, yet if a desire of maintaining our integrity is the real motive, how animating the promise, "*if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him †*?"

God will never forget any work of faith or labour of love; every act of self-denial will be abundantly recompensed by that glorious reward, which will be proportioned to our zeal, our activity, and our diligence.

"*To be sincere, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation ‡*, was what St. Paul required of the primitive Christians, and innocence and uprightness are as necessary to recommend our Religion now as ever they were. The Gospel is openly ridiculed; and it is generally acknowledged, except by a few bigots, who are resolved to shut their eyes, that the violent zeal of some, and the

* 2 Tim. ii. 12.

† Ibid.

‡ Philipp. ii. 15.
mean

mean compliance of others, with established absurdities, is the grand and principal cause of this contempt of things sacred; and therefore it might perhaps be better for those to cease to complain, who do not exert themselves to the very utmost in putting the adversary to silence, by giving a proof of the sincerity of their faith, which shall admit of no contradiction.

But it is time for me to draw towards the conclusion of this letter. I have offered all the arguments which suggest themselves to me, and heartily wish that I had ability to set them in a more striking light, and to enforce them more powerfully, by the agreeable help of an elegant style and refined language. Herein I am sensible how much I fail, and therefore make my appeal from critical severity, to the candour of the reader.

Your Lordship's indulgence, also, I feel myself strongly inclined to solicit. If I have addressed you with any unbecoming familiarity, forgive me. Your Lordship cannot be more sensible than myself, of your vast superiority to me in parts and learning; and you are deserving of additional respect on account of your rank, and of reverence on account of your age.

To be infallible, however, is not the lot of mortals; and as the Bishop of Carlisle may possibly be mistaken, I hope the freedom used in this address will be pardoned. I wish your Lordship a long continuance of health and life, and that every day

may add fresh honours to your name, and stamp a more lasting dignity on your character; that the Christian world may long be blessed with your labours, and that whenever you are removed hence, it may be to the highest seat of glory and happiness.

Some parts of this letter may give offence, perhaps, to your Lordship; if not to many others. Very free censures of our established forms have been thought indecent, even by some Dissenters, and the friends of the Church have severely condemned them. Every person must be directed by his own ideas of propriety, but I have never seen any good reason assigned for restraining the warmest expressions of dislike, when so fair an occasion offers.

Charity and good manners oblige us to speak of particular characters with respect: The amiable and worthy are deserving of many grains of allowance, even from those who may think them in some instances inconsistent and absurd. But the unchristian impositions, and strange doctrines of worldly establishments, ought, in my opinion, to have no quarter. The man who opposes them should exert all his talents of learning, argument, and ridicule. The Jewish Prophets treat the worship of their Heathen neighbours (who were much more numerous, and as to power and grandeur much superior to them) without the least ceremony. St. Paul calls the Mosaic Rites, after they were abolished by the Divine Authority,

city, "*weak and beggarly elements* *;" a language, which was perhaps very offensive to many zealots. The English Clergy have not been always very complaisant to the Church of Rome. In Ireland, where the majority are Papists, the craft of the Priests, and the superstition of the people, is animadverted upon with pretty great severity; and I apprehend it is not owing so much to a sense of delicacy as a fear of danger, that the like is not done in France and Spain.

The cause of truth can be injured by nothing but misrepresentation. If writers are careful to set the doctrines they expose in a just light, it would be much better to refute their arguments, than to be angry with them for the warmth and keenness of their expressions. I shall ever be ambitious of the character of a fair and impartial writer; but though some may call my language indecent, and others may term it insolent, yet while it is only levelled at doctrines and forms, and avoids indiscriminate personal reflections, I shall make no apology for it.

One apology, however, I ought to make, and that is for my ascribing the "*Considerations*" to your Lordship, when you have not seen fit to set your name to them. But as there is no doubt of your being the author, and as they have been ascribed to you long since, in a well-known Monthly Publica-

* Gal. iv. 9.

tion, of which your Lorship would probably have taken notice, had it been wrong or offensive, I hope I have not done amiss in thus addressing you, for

I am, my LORD,

With the greatest Respect and Veneration,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most humble Servant,

and sincere Well-wisher,

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

I HAD almost finished this epistle to your Lordship, when the learned Archdeacon Blackburne's four Discourses to the Clergy of his Archdeaconry fell into my hands. I find by the preface to these discourses, that "the Considerations" have not escaped animadversion, and that the sentiments which I have taken notice of are censured with some severity; and one observation made which suggested itself naturally to me, and for which I am not indebted to that author, whoever he is, to wit: "That remaining in the Church, and rising from one post to another, because it may enable a person to do good and be of service to his master, when the terms required are contrary to his injunctions, is in reality doing evil that good may come." Those perhaps who used that language in the Apostle's days, meant a different kind of good from that which is now proposed by continuing in the Church; the expression, however, may still be used as proverbial, and containing a very important sentiment, for few will venture to say in so many words, that any motive ought to induce a man to do that which he knows

knows to be wrong, especially when the advantage accruing to himself is such as to render his sincerity liable to be called in question.

I agree with the Archdeacon, so far as to allow, that the Clergy, who, like your Lordship and himself, continue in the Church, notwithstanding your avowed disapprobation of some of its solemn forms, are intitled to candour. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive, with what force those arguments may strike some minds, which appear very weak and futile to others. Those of the Clergy also, who are zealous against any alterations, have the same, if not a superior right to indulgence, though the enemies of Subscription may think their objections to it unanswerable.

The Archdeacon is persuaded, that to endeavour to convince them of their error, does not betray a want of due candour; and he would not scruple to censure those as bigots, who refused to give him an attentive hearing.

What I have offered, to shew the fallacy of those principles, which are urged in favour of a conduct, the propriety of which is much more doubtful than the establishment and imposition of human creeds, ought not to be censured as proceeding from an unfeeling or a thoughtless temper. Every man "*must stand or fall to his own master.*" Christians however cannot be too often reminded, that their Master, whose example they are to follow, was emphatically

emphatically stiled "*that just one* * , *neither was guile found in his mouth* †."

His circumstances were poor, his accommodations mean; "*and for this end was he born, and for this cause came he into the world, that he might bear witness unto the truth* ‡." To the truth then, as it is in him, his followers ought to be ready to sacrifice their wealth, their ease, their lives; and if their lives, surely they ought to quit any posts, how usefully soever they may fill them in some respects, if their continuance in such stations obliges them to countenance any wrong measures.

I am pleased to find that I was not wrong in selecting Erasmus and Father Paul, as men the most remarkable for being examples of a conduct, which to me appears, notwithstanding the authority of such illustrious names, and all that your Lordship and the Archdeacon have advanced, very indefensible.

I shall ever revere the names of Erasmus, of Paul, of Clarke, of Hoadley, and of Law; but let it be thy highest ambition, oh my soul, to rank with such as Hufs, Ridley, Latimer, Robertson, and Lindsey §.

* Acts xxii. 14.

† 1 Pet. ii. 22.

‡ John xviii. 37.

§ Right glad am I, that since I wrote the above sentence, the respectable name of *Jebb* can be added to the list of worthy confessors.

N. B. This Pamphlet has been ready for the press for more than a year, and is published without any alterations. The Author lives at such a distance from the press, as to be unable to review the work, and hopes this circumstance will be an excuse for some errors, which may perhaps be owing to the printer.

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